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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 000501

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINS](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: MAIN OPPOSITION CHP LEADERSHIP STRUGGLE -- BAYKAL
USES ANTI-AMERICANISM TO RALLY SUPPORT

REF: A. ANKARA 000198

[B](#). 04 ISTANBUL 001729

[C](#). 04 ANKARA 006841

[D](#). 04 ANKARA 006839

POLCOUNS John Kunstadter; reasons 1.4 (b,d)

[1](#). (C) Summary. Struggle between Republican People's Party (CHP) leader Baykal and Istanbul-Sisli Mayor Sarigul for control of left-of-center CHP will come to a head at the Jan. 29-30 party convention. Most observers think Baykal will win the contest, but the outcome is not a shoe-in. The U.S. has no direct interest in the internal struggles of the increasingly irrelevant CHP, but the lies about U.S. policy spread by pro-Baykal supporters have increased the load of anti-American rhetoric in Turkey. End Summary.

[2](#). (C) The struggle between CHP leader Deniz Baykal and Istanbul Sisli district Mayor Mustafa Sarigul for the control of Turkey's oldest and currently second largest party (Ref A) will come to a head at the party's Jan. 29-30 Extraordinary Convention. Most journalists and Embassy contacts think Baykal will win the contest. Anti-Baykal CHP dissidents with whom we met this week were noticeably less optimistic about their faction's chances for success, but several retained the conviction that Baykal would lose.

[3](#). (C) Of the approximately 1,300 CHP delegates who will attend the convention, Turkish newspapers report that Baykal has the support of about 750 delegates and Sarigul has the support of about 500 delegates. A third potential candidate, Zulfu Livaneli, has the support of about 100 delegates, far short of the 260 delegates needed to run for the chairmanship. Efforts to find a compromise candidate seem to have failed. A candidate needs to receive a majority of the vote from the delegates present at the convention in the first or second round to win the election. If no one receives a majority in either of the first two rounds, then the plurality winner in the third round becomes the chairman.

[4](#). (C) Baykal is very unpopular in the party and in the public at large, but he has hand-picked most of the delegates and other party officials. Sarigul asserts he plans to bus 30,000 supporters to the convention hall to rally outside and pressure the delegates. Although the convention promises to make excellent political theater, Sarigul is unlikely to unseat Baykal. In order to win the chairmanship, Sarigul would have to maintain his 500 delegates, win the support of Livaneli's delegates, and convince around 100 of Baykal's supporters to change sides or not participate in the elections.

[5](#). (C) Baykal's re-election campaign has focused on two issues -- charges of Sarigul's corruption (Ref B) and allegations that the USG is interfering in intra-CHP politics. Many CHP contacts dislike Baykal's authoritarian leadership style and believe that his leadership has hurt the party, but they are also distrustful of Sarigul, whom they see as corrupt, uneducated, and authoritarian. Baykal and his allies in the party have publicly accused the USG of trying to replace Baykal as punishment for CHP's opposition to the failed 1 March 2003 resolution in the Turkish parliament that would have authorized US troop deployment into Iraq through Turkey. Baykal's allies misuse Sarigul's participation in an IV program in mid-2004 as "evidence" that the US backs Sarigul. Embassy officials have countered Baykal's conspiracy theories in private conversations, but the mud appears to have stuck in the opinion of some in an already conspiracy-theory prone public.

[6](#). (C) Some Embassy contacts -- including MP Hasan Aydin and Erol Cevikce -- have predicted that a new party will be formed on the left if Baykal retains the party chairmanship. Cevikce claims that former Gaziantep Mayor Celal Dogan and former Kurdish MP Layla Zana will found a new party uniting Turkey's reform-oriented social democrats and anti-Baykal leftists with Kurdish and Alevis elements. Aydin and Cevikce both claim that the new party will be able to attract at least 20 MPs from CHP, thereby allowing it to form an official party block in parliament.

17. (C) We note that, although in principle such a political formulation could take root, it would have to overcome a number of political hurdles. In the past, Kurdish-oriented parties have been banned by the Kemalist state. Ethnically Turkish social democrats and leftist, moreover, may hesitate to ally with Kurdish activists because a similar plan in the early 1990s backfired. Cevikce asserts that military circles trust the ethnically half-Turkmen/half-Kurdish Dogan from his time as mayor of Gaziantep (i.e. believe that he does not harbor Kurdish nationalist or separatist sentiments), but Dogan was a left-wing radical in the generation of 1968 and the degree to which the military actually trusts him is questionable.

18. (C) Comment. Under Baykal's leadership, CHP is unpopular, un-dynamic, and unable to mount a serious challenge to governing AKP (Refs C and D). CHP claims to be a modern social democratic party, but many of its leaders are reactionary defenders of the Turkish statist-secularist-Kemalist status quo. The U.S. has no direct interest in the internal struggles of the increasingly irrelevant CHP. However, there is a danger that desperate, dead-end politicians spreading lies about U.S. policy will exacerbate the anti-American rhetoric that already circulates here. End Comment.
DEUTSCH